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POTENTIAL PRO-ALLIED POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN FINLAND

Description

A study of pro-Allied political groups and elements of increasing importance in post-hostilities Finland.

25 September 1944

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SUMMARY

Potential pro-Allied political leadership in Finland includes liberals, radicals, and conservatives who have come to realize that, in order to preserve her independent existence in the post-war world, Finland will have to terminate her anti-Russian orientation. The most compact of the groups working for an improvement in Russo-Finnish relations is the Central Federation of Finnish Trade Unions (c. 85,000 members), which is reinforced by left-wing and other elements of the Social Democratic Party. The left wing of the Swedish People's Party and the National Progressive Party also advocate a pro-Allied orientation. The Communist Party, outlawed in 1930, has reappeared as a legal group.

A Russo-Finnish rapprochement is favored for practical reasons by certain conservative elder statesmen, business leaders, and high-ranking Army officers. As a result of their past and present efforts to bring about a Russo-Finnish understanding, the political stock of these groups may be expected to rise now that hostilities have ceased.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the establishment of the Finnish republic in 1919, and particularly since the termination of the Winter War in 1940, the problem of Russo-Finnish relations has surpassed in importance devotion to "conservative" or "liberal" principles. There are today in Finland "conservatives" who wish for a liberalization of the Finnish attitude toward the USSR; and "liberals" who, in the process of attempting to conserve their individual or collective gains, have become implacable foes of a Russo-Finnish rapprochement. The fact that in Finland practical considerations of foreign policy cut across ideological and party lines explains the greatest paradox of Finnish politics: the pro-German orientation of a democratic republic, in whose parliament 85 seats out of 200 are held by Social Democrats.

Consequently, in dealing with Finnish politics, the ambiguous political labels "conservative" and "liberal" must be discarded. Thus, Finnish political leaders and their following fall into two groups. To the first of these belong conservatives and liberals who cannot alter their anti-Russian stand; the second is formed of conservatives, liberals, and radicals who, whatever their previous convictions, now stand for a Russo-Finnish rapprochement. Since in the post-war world Finland will have to produce an entirely new set of national leaders in order to preserve her independent existence adjacent to Russia, the second group of Finnish political factions is becoming increasingly important. Of the leaders of the second group only the Communists and the left-wing Social Democrats are genuinely pro-Russian; and only the National Progressives and the left-wing of the Swedish People's Party genuinely pro-Anglo-American. The remaining members of the group may be described either as opportunists or as sincere patriots who have now become convinced that Soviet power is to be considered as a permanent factor in the Baltic.

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POTENTIAL PRO-ALLIED POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN FINLAND

I. ORGANIZED GROUPS

A. The Central Federation of Finnish Trade Unions

The most compact of the groups working for an improvement in Russo-Finnish relations is the Central Federation of Finnish Trade Unions, which is headed by Eero Vuori. The Federation, which includes approximately 85,000 industrial workers, issued a statement on 10 May 1943, in which it urged the government to cease hostilities against the USSR at the earliest possible moment. The statement warned that Finland could not "isolate herself from Russia" and expressed the belief that a breach in diplomatic relations with the United States would be disastrous for Finland.[1] This group opposed almost unanimously the Ryti-Ribbentrop agreement of 27 June 1944, and, through the activities of Vuori, played an important part in preparing the presidential change of 3 August 1944. When the change took place and Mannerheim replaced Ryti in the presidency of the republic, Vuori, contrary to general expectations, was not at first included in the new cabinet. The reason may have been the anxiety of the Trade Unions not to share in the responsibility of accepting an onerous peace from the USSR, or the possibility that the Hackzell cabinet was viewed by them as only a transitional arrangement, to be succeeded by a more distinctly pro-Russian government as soon as its objective -- the termination of Russo-Finnish hostilities -- had been achieved. According to other reports, Vuori's exclusion was due to Tanner's opposition. It is to be noted that on 21 September 1944 Vuori entered the cabinet as a "deputy minister." According to an American observer on the scene, Vuori is not a strong figure. He is described as a "slow-thinking citizen, a bureaucrat whose heart is roughly in the right place but who cannot seem to do much about it."[2]

1. The New York Times, 11 May 1943.
2. OSS source A.

B. The Social Democratic Party

This party, which is the largest and best organized political group in Finland with eighty-five of the 200 seats in the Diet, should be the most potent force in bringing about a Russo-Finnish rapprochement, even though it is an affiliate of the Second International, but it is so badly split that its efficiency has been greatly decreased. The fragmentation of the party is mainly the result of the policies followed by the party leader Väinö Tanner. Under Tanner's leadership the party has committed itself to all-out collaboration with Germany, and even after the signing of the Ryti-Ribbentrop pact, on 27 June 1944, it voted not to withdraw its representatives from the cabinet. As a result, the name Tanner is anathema to the Russians. For all practical purposes the Tanner faction of the Social Democratic Party, which controls the Party Council, has compromised its position to the point of political suicide. Nevertheless, it may be expected to wage a tooth-and-nail struggle for its survival after Russo-Finnish rapprochement becomes a reality.

The strongest potential leader of the anti-Tannerites in the Social Democratic Party is Eino Kilpi, the editor of the influential Suomen Sosialidemokraatti.[1] Other members of the anti-Tanner bloc within the party are J. V. Keto, one of Helsinki's three mayors; Mauno Pekkala, former Minister of Finance; Mrs. Sylvi Kyllikki-Kilpi, member of the Diet and wife of Eino Kilpi; Gunnar Andersson, member of the Diet; Karl A. Fagerholm, a former Minister of Social Affairs; Prof. V. Voionmaa, Chairman of the Diet Foreign Affairs Committee and former Minister of Trade and Industry; and Atos Wirtanen, member of the Diet and a severe critic of the government who, just before the termination of Russo-Finnish hostilities, was placed on trial with two other men for publishing and circulating the underground

1. OSS Source A.

newspaper SELVÄT SANAT (Plain Words).[1] Keto, Pekkala, Eino Kilpi, Mrs. Kilpi, and Voionmaa were signers of the famous Petition of the Thirty-three, which was submitted to President Ryti in August 1943, asking him to "explore" the possibilities of peace with the USSR.[2] These anti-Tanner leaders have remained members of the Social Democratic Party and are now active in working for a solution of the Finno-Russian problem. Their importance and influence will presumably be great in post-hostilities Finnish politics.

C. The Left-Wing Socialists and the Communists

In addition to the split existing within the Party between the Tannerite and anti-Tannerite factions, the Social Democratic Party is in serious danger of fragmentation owing to the activities of a number of dissident Socialist leaders. Almost immediately after the termination of the Winter War in 1940, a dangerous schism appeared in the party when these leaders expressed doubt as to the necessity of the war with the USSR. The spokesman for the dissidents was Karl H. Wiik, the party secretary. He offered a plan of "socialization" for Finland, as the best way of coming to an agreement with the USSR and still preserving Finnish independence. The other members of the dissident group were Kai Sundström, Kaarina Rydberg, Mikko Ampuja, Kaarlo Yrjö Räisänen, and Meltii. A few weeks after the German-Finnish attack on the Soviet Union, action was taken against these left-wingers, who became known as the famous "sixlings" (kuusilaiset). Dr. Johan Helo, a Helsinki municipal official, was the seventh distinguished Socialist apprehended at the same time. As a result of a trial which began in December 1941 before the Turku (Åbo) Court of Appeals, the dissident Socialist leaders were given heavy prison sentences. Their conviction was considered by certain left-wing observers to

1. Svenska Dagbladet, 17 August 1944 (Pressintell Cable, 17 August 1944).
2. Dagens Nyheter, 27 August 1943 (Stockholm Wire # 2707, 27 August 1943).

be in the nature of "judicial murder."[1] After Mannerheim's appointment to the presidency on 3 August 1944, the Political Department of the Swedish Aid to Finland organization petitioned the new head of the Finnish state to grant an amnesty to the sixlings and to Kelo. The Swedish plea was not immediately granted, but after the termination of Russo-Finnish hostilities on 21 September 1944, all political prisoners were liberated in conformity with the terms of the armistice.[2] The sixlings will probably regain their seats in the Diet, but they will probably not re-enter the Social Democratic Party as long as it is dominated by the Tanner faction. Should this be the case, they may form the nucleus of a new radical party, to the left of the Social Democrats but to the right of the Communists. In spite of the recent denial of Wiik,[3] there is a strong possiblility for the formation of such a party, which would play an extremely important part in post-war Finnish politics.

The left-wing Socialists are strongly seconded by the Communists in their demand for a Russo-Finnish rapprochement. The Finnish Communist Party was illegal from 1930 until October 1944 but is now expected to reappear in the Diet as soon as new elections take place. The present leaders of the Communists in Finland are Mauri Ryömä, a medical student and a former member of the Diet; Hella Wuolijoki, the Estonian-born playwright; and Hertta Kuusinen, daughter of Otto Kuusinen, the head of the Finnish puppet government which was set up by the Russians on the Karelian isthmus during the Winter War of 1939-1940.

Ryömä, together with Lauri Vilenius, was the founder in 1940 of the "Association for Peace and Friendship Between Finland and the Soviet Union." The Russian Tass agency placed the

1. Ny Dag, 7 August 1944 (News Digest #1521).
2. Moscow (Tass), 19 October 1944 (FCC: Ticker, 19 October 1944).
3. Stockholms Tidningen, 2 October 1944 (OWI: European News Digest, 6 October 1944).

membership of the Association at that time at 20,000; a statement issued by the Finnish government on 9 August 1940 claimed that the organization consisted of "250 paid Russian agents." Meetings of the group were broken up by the police in Helsinki and Tampere.[1] Immediately after the German-Finnish attack on the USSR in June 1941, the leaders of the Association were imprisoned and kept incarcerated until the signing of the Russo-Finnish armistice in September 1944. Ryömä, Wuolijoki, and Hertta Kuusinen are now members of the Executive Committee of the newly formed and broadly based Russo-Finnish Society.

On 19 October 1944 representatives of the Finnish Communist Party filed registration papers at the Helsinki Registration office, naming Ville Pessi as Secretary General and Aimo Aaltonen as Chairman of the Party Committee.[2] The Party apparently intends to participate in the elections for a new Diet, scheduled for January 1945. According to a Swedish source, in such an event the Communists will not be able to win more than twenty or thirty of the 200 Diet seats.[3] This opinion is shared by an American observer on the scene, who reports that the Finnish Communists and their leaders are not supported by the Russians and that consequently they are not very strong. In this observer's opinion "Communism /will/ not emerge immediately in Finland, provided that unemployment /can/ be done away with."[4]

D. The Swedish People's Party

Another important component of the pro-Allied bloc in Finland is the Swedish People's Party, especially its left-wing. This party controls eighteen seats in the Diet. Its members

1. The New York Times, 2 and 10 August, 1940.
2. Finnish Home Service, 20 October 1944 (FCC: Daily, 21 October 1944).
3. Aftonbladet, 20 October 1944 (OWI: European News Digest, 22 October 1944).
4. OSS #41166, 24 October 1944.

are handicapped not so much by their "racial" origin as by their determination to cling to their Swedish cultural heritage. This cultural aloofness makes them extremely vulnerable to attack from chauvinistic Finnish circles. For example, at the time of the Petition of the Thirty-Three controversy, rightist Finnish circles argued that the presence of so many Swedo-Finns among the signatories of the famous document was proof of a Swedo-Finnish attempt "to separate from the Finnish majority and to break the unity of their front."[1] It is improbable that the Swedo-Finnish signers of the petition had any such intention. That there was proportionately more pro-peace sentiment among the Swedo-Finnish minority than among the Finnish majority is no doubt a result of the fact that for linguistic and cultural reasons the Swedo-Finns are able to maintain freer intercourse with the outside world than their Finnish compatriots. Thus among the thirty-three signers of the petition the following Swedo-Finnish names appeared: Baron Ernst von Born, Chairman of the Swedish People's Party; Professor Ernst Ertlander; Dr. C.O. Fritsch, member of the Diet; Professor R. Furuhjelm, Chairman of the Swedish People's Party's Diet group; G. Lindstroem; R. Toerngren; Y. Oelling; K. J. Wenman; J. Oesterholm; Editor Henrik Antell; Editor Gunnar Hendrickson; Dr. E. Hornborg, member of the Diet; Prof. H. Pipping, member of the Diet; Editor E. Sundqvist; Editor Frederik Valros of the recently banned Svenska Pressen; L. Jern, vice chairman of the Swedish People's Party's Diet group; and L. Zillacius. As a result of their past efforts to bring about a Russo-Finnish understanding, and in view of the new orientation of Finnish foreign policy, the political stock of these Swedo-Finns may be expected to rise now that hostilities have ceased.

1. Hufvudstadsbladet, 9 October 1943 (News Digest #1263).

It should be noted that the two associates of Atos Wirtanen who was placed on trial shortly before the termination of hostilities for publishing the clandestine anti-government paper, SELVÄT SANAT,[1] were Swedo-Finns. They are Nils Meinander, former assistant chief of the Finnish Government Information Bureau, and Professor Olaf Barck of the Swedish Academy at Turku (Åbo). Meinander has been under suspicion for a long time as a pro-Allied sympathizer. In November 1943 he was removed from his position in the Information Bureau and received orders to join his regiment at the front.[2] The government's determination to put a stop to the spread of pro-peace sentiment among the Swedo-Finnish minority could also be detected in the banning of the liberal Swedish-language Helsinki daily Svenska Pressen,[3] and in its replacement by the pro-war Aftonposten. The strength of the peace sentiment in the Swedish People's Party was indicated by the action of the party's parliamentary group, which on 29 June 1944 -- two days after the Ryti-Ribbentrop agreement -- by a vote of fifteen to two, expelled from the Party Foreign Minister Ramsay and Minister of the Interior Ehrnrooth, the only two Swedish People's Party representatives in the cabinet.[4]

E. The National Progressive Party

The pro-Allied bloc includes also the members and sympathizers of the National Progressive Party. This group has only six seats in the Diet, but it probably has more political influence than this small parliamentary representation would seem to indicate. Membership in the party is recruited mainly from intellectual circles; leadership is in the hands of

1. Budapest (Press) in German to Europe, 16 August 1944.
2. The New York Times, 26 November 1943.
3. DNB, 9 June 1944 (News Digest #1470).
4. OSS source A.

Western-minded democrats, who advocate progressive social reforms and favor close cooperation with the United States. The present leaders are Minister of Education, Kalle Kauppi; Eero Rydman, Chief Mayor of Helsinki; ex-Premier J. W. Rangell; L. Levämäki, Party Secretary; B. Sarlin; M. Hannula; S. Tuomioja; E. Heinio; and A. Ketonen. An important member of the group is Eljas Erkko, editor and owner of the influential daily, Helsingin Sanomat. Erkko was Minister of Foreign Affairs during the Winter War of 1939-40 and Minister to Sweden during the interwar period. According to a source intimately connected with him, Erkko has allowed himself to be browbeaten by ex-President Ryti, who told him to stay out of politics and to keep his name out of even his own newspaper.[1] This injunction, however, did not prevent him from organizing in July 1943 the non-political "Finnish-American Society," which is dedicated to the promotion of better relations between the two countries. Erkko himself is the chairman of the society; other leaders are E. Hiitonen, attorney and diplomat; Dr. C. O. Fritsch, influential member of the Swedish People's Party; and U. Hannula, ex-Minister of Education and Agrarian member of the Diet.[2] The Society has the active support of the Swedish People's Party, which in a resolution adopted 31 May 1943 urged the maintenance of the "best possible relations between Finland and the United States"[3] and also of the Social Democratic Party, which in its manifesto of February 1943, asked for "friendlier relations" between the two countries.[4] Much of the Progressives' propaganda work is carried on in the so-called discussion clubs which have been organized around the party. The members of these clubs are artists, authors, engineers, scientists, and younger journalists who have been trying to maintain contact with like-minded

1. OSS Source B.
2. The New York Times, 3 July 1943.
3. The New York Times, 1 June 1943.
4. The New York Times, 16 February 1943.

intellectuals in France, Russia, Great Britain, and the United States. Their aim is to work against German influence and to establish good relations between Finland and the USSR.[1] Their orientation, and indeed that of the entire National Progressive Party, is Western; their hope is to strengthen the bonds which tie Finland to the Anglo-American-Scandinavian West and at the same time to live as good neighbors with the USSR.

II. NON-ORGANIZED SUPPORTERS

The groups described above advocate improved relations with the USSR and with the democratic West mainly for ideological reasons. In addition, there are in Finland today certain extremely influential persons and combinations which favor a Russo-Finnish rapprochement purely on the basis of pragmatic considerations. These elements are divisible into the following three groups:

A. Conservative Elder Statesmen

These men stem from the nineteenth century Finnish political faction known as "Old Finns" which collaborated first with Sweden, then with Russia, and finally with Germany for purely opportunistic reasons. When Swedish rule over Finland was replaced by Russian supremacy, the "Old Finns" became "Russian-Finns" and either held high positions in the Czarist administration or otherwise derived considerable material benefit from their Russian connections. When Russian power disappeared at the end of the First World War, the "Old Finns" turned to Germany and laid plans for transforming Finland into a German satellite monarchy. When these plans failed, the "Old Finns" concentrated their energies on maintaining their political and economic position in the new Finnish republic. Although they were almost without exception of Swedish origin, many of them Fennicized their names and otherwise identified themselves with victorious Finnish nationalism. They soon attained high

1. OSS Source B.

government positions and industrial posts. The leader of this group -- and perhaps the only "Old Finn" who clung fast to a pro-German orientation to the very end -- was P. E. Svinhufvud, who died recently, leaving a pro-German political testament. The other outstanding men among the "Old Finns" -- J. K. Paasikivi, A. V. Hackzell, C. J. A. Enckell -- are now apparently on the verge of returning to their former articulate pro-Russian sympathies. These men spent a large part of their lives in Russian government service or in Russian professional or business occupations; although they are Swedish by descent and Finnish by choice, they are Russian by long association and in mode of living. There is no reason to suppose that these men would have decided to build their careers and fortunes on Finnish soil had it not been for the Bolshevik Revolution. Their long years of Russian experience is their best qualification for playing important rôles in any future Russo-Finnish rapprochement.

B. Business Leaders

Finnish business has suffered greatly from the two wars against the USSR since 1939. Recently the Kauppalehti, the Finnish journal of commerce, published a significant article, which said in part: "It is worth remembering that Russia is Finland's neighbor and will always remain /her neighbor/. Therefore, it would be desirable for Finland to establish more lasting relations with Russia than those which have hitherto existed."[1] The great industrial magnates of Finland, the Gullichsens and the Ahlströms, are known to have strong pro-British and pro-Scandinavian sympathies. Åke Gartz, one of the directors of the Ahlström Concern, was a peace delegate to Moscow in 1940. Gartz and Gullichsen were definitely opposed to the Ryti-Ribbentrop Pact of 27 June 1944; later they were reported to be supporting the so-called "peace-activists" in their attempt

1. Aftontidningen, 19 August 1944.

to cancel the agreement. Another leading industrialist, B. G. Grönblom of the Vuoksenniska Iron Works Co., was employed by the Finnish government as a confidential diplomatic agent in the pre-armistice negotiations in Sweden. Finnish business leaders have been reassured by the new Russian policy of non-interference with the social and economic structure of neighboring countries. Many of them favor cooperation with the USSR, provided that they are allowed to retain their wealth, position, and influence.

C. Army Leaders

Many Finnish officers are German-trained and pro-German in outlook, but certain key positions in the Army are held by men who are former Russian officers or who spent long years in Russia. The most eminent of these high-ranking officers is Field Marshal -- now also President -- Mannerheim, Commander-in-Chief of the Finnish Armed Forces. Mannerheim has never been an enthusiastic admirer of Germany; in fact, his attitude toward the Reich has always been marked by a degree of coolness. Like other Czarist officers with Finnish connections, Mannerheim continued his military career in Finland after the success of the Russian revolution. The fact that he has commanded the Finnish Army in three wars against Russia since 1918 has probably convinced him of the necessity of a Russo-Finnish rapprochement. Mannerheim became the rallying point of the peace party in Finland; his recent elevation to the presidency was arranged partly by the "peace activists" and was the first step toward peace with the USSR. The Marshal's right-hand man, Gen. Waldén, is another high-ranking Finnish officer intimately connected with Russia. Waldén spent many years in St. Petersburg as a commercial agent and returned to Finland only after the revolution. He retained his portfolio as Minister of Defense in the two new governments which succeeded the Linkomies cabinet. Waldén, (who lost his son during the last days of hostilities on the

Karelian isthmus) is influential not only because of his military position but also by virtue of his ownership of the great Yhtyneet Paperitehtaat (Combined Paper Mills). General Martola, who entered the cabinet with Premier Castrén as a deputy Minister on 21 September 1944, may also be considered a member of this group. Officers of Walden's and Martola's type will rally around Mannerheim and follow his lead toward a Russo-Finnish understanding.

III. CONCLUSION

The problems which pro-Allied political leadership will face in Finland are conditioned by the relative post-war strength of Germany and the USSR. Since the sympathies of a nation cannot be changed overnight, Finland's pro-Allied leaders will have to contend with considerable covert opposition. The tenacity of this opposition will depend in large measure on the vitality Germany exhibits during the post-war years. The tenure of Finnish pro-Allied leadership, on the other hand, will be determined by the western border policy of a powerful USSR. Since at the present time this policy seems to be directed toward the establishment of Russophile coalition governments in the European countries bordering on the Soviet Union, there is reason to suppose that the groups described in this paper will combine to form Finland's new political leadership during the immediate post-war period.